



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Responsible Logic

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects

Moshe spoke thus to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe because of shortness of breath and hard labor... Moshe spoke before G-d, saying, "Behold, the children of Israel did not listen to me. How then will Pharaoh listen to me, seeing that I am of closed lips?" (6:9,12)

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, G-d instructs Moshe to inform the Jewish people of their impending salvation. G-d will take them out from under the burden of Egypt, appoint them as His nation, and bring them to the land that had been promised to their forefathers. Unfortunately, the people are not attentive to Moshe's tidings "because of their shortness of breath and their hard labor." The Ramban explains that they were suffering so greatly and were so overburdened that they simply couldn't pay any heed to Moshe's words. Shortly thereafter, G-d sends Moshe to Pharaoh with a similar message: it is time to let the Jews go. Moshe, however, maintains that it is not sensible for him to go. If the Jewish people didn't listen to him, he argues, certainly Pharaoh won't listen to him, particularly because Moshe is of "closed lips" i.e. he has a speech impediment.

Rashi comments that this is an example of a *kal vachomer* (a *fortiori* logic). If the Jewish people didn't listen to me, then certainly Pharaoh won't either. The difficulty that many commentaries raise, however, is that the logic here seems flawed. The Torah tells us why the Jewish people didn't listen. It was due to their suffering and labor. This reason is not applicable to Pharaoh. A further difficulty is that Moshe seems to imply that the people didn't listen due to his "closed lips" when the text makes it clear that it was due to their inability to listen in light of all their suffering.

Perhaps these discrepancies can actually lead us to an important lesson in leadership and responsibility. Although the Torah testifies that the people didn't listen due to "shortness of breath" and "hard labor," Moshe in his great humility was not focused on why *they* didn't listen, but rather on why *he* couldn't get his message across. When a leader fails to inspire or motivate, if he or she focuses only on what was wrong with those in his or her charge, that leader will never be able to adjust their approach to engineer success. When Moshe failed to get his message across, he took responsibility – thought only of his own shortcomings and therefore believed that his speech impediment was the cause of them not listening. If the Jewish people did not listen because of that, then surely Pharaoh wouldn't either.

When a relationship, organization or project faces challenges, it is rarely only one person's fault. Instead of focusing on what others should be doing different, a person with humility and true leadership qualities will look inwards and ask, where have I fallen short and what can I do to better the situation?

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, "I am Hashem. I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov..." (6:2-3)

I appeared to the forefathers (Rashi).

We know that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov are our forefathers. Why does Rashi feel compelled to inform us of that and what is he telling us by adding the word "forefathers?"

Parsha Riddle

What is the similarity between the first three of the ten plagues, and the first two of the Ten Commandments?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

"Shall I go summon a Jewish wet nurse?" (2:7)

The baby refused to nurse from an Egyptian woman, because Hashem said, "Shall the mouth that will converse with the Divine Presence drink impure milk?" (Rashi) What halacha is derived from this?

Answer: A Jewish child should not nurse from a non-Jewish woman. (Y.D. 81:7)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Vaeira* (9:29), Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh that he would beseech Hashem "when I leave the city" for the cessation of the thunder and hail (of the seventh of the Ten Plagues). Rashi cites the *midrash* that "he did not pray within the city because it was full of idols."

Based in part on this *midrash*, the *Terumas ha-Deshen* (1:6) rules that ideally, a traveler should not pray in a city of idolaters, since in such a city "there are many idols and houses of impurity, and there is virtually no lodging place belonging to a non-Jew in which you will not find many idols drawn or engraved upon the walls, and sometimes abominations and graven images." If there is no alternative, however, then it is permitted to pray in such a city, since today anyway "all our prayers are in cities that are filled with abominations and idols." The implication is that prayer in the vicinity of idols, although not ideal, is not strictly forbidden, and some authorities note that this is implied by the language of the *midrash* itself, which states merely that "Moshe did not desire to pray in Egypt" (*Shut. Lev Avraham* 30).

Accordingly, various contemporary authorities permit bedridden hospital patients to pray in rooms containing "idols" (presumably crucifixes), particularly if they close their eyes (*Lev Avraham*, and see *She'arim Metzuyanim ba-Halachah* vol. 1 p. 114).

If there are idols hanging on the east wall of the room in which one is praying, then one should face in a different direction, despite the fact that (in Europe and the United States) one normally faces east during prayer. It is certainly prohibited to bow in the direction of the idols (*Chayei Adam* 23:5; *Mishneh Berurah* 94:30).

The *Avnei Nezer* (OC 32) draws another *halachic* inference from Moshe's reluctance to pray in Egypt, that it is prohibited to establish a place of prayer underneath the residence of a non-Jew, since "every non-Jew has an idol on his table." It is unclear if this objection is limited to the establishment of a permanent place of prayer, or extends even to any ad hoc prayer underneath a non-Jewish residence. (cf. R. Dov Linzer, *Praying With A Cross In the Room*).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I was proof of Hashem.
2. I was from a finger.
3. I am tiny.
4. I came from the sand.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I defied nature.
2. I made them go inside.
3. I was suspended.
4. I am waiting for Gog and Magog.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Nile River (I saved the savior, I am a god of Egypt, Moshe wouldn't strike me, Sons were thrown to me.)

#2 Tzaraas/Leprocy (I was a sign, I am for Lashon Harah, I could remind you of snow, I could get you locked up.)

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